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ABSTRACT

This fact sheet suggests several strategies for counseling students with disabilities who are considering postsecondary education opportunities. It was designed to assist those who advise or counsel students with disabilities in high school, community and junior colleges, career training schools, vocational technical schools, 4-year colleges, universities, and graduate programs. Advisors and counselors are urged to: (1) encourage students to assess interests, aptitude, and achievement; (2) provide nonrestrictive career counseling; (3) encourage students to base decision making about postsecondary education and training on a variety of criteria; and (4) assure access to the counseling environment. Selected resources are described that may help in implementing the strategies discussed. These resources include vocational rehabilitation services, Supplemental Security Income, the Social Security Disability Insurance program, the Association on Handicapped Student Services in Postsecondary Education, and the HEATH Resource Center. (JDD)

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STRATEGIES FOR ADVISING DISABLED STUDENTS FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Times Have Changed

Opportunities are expanding for postsecondary education, career options, and life choices for people with disabilities. Legislation, such as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94–142), the Rehabilitation Act (especially Section 504), and the Vocational Education Act and Amendments plus the growing awareness of disabled people and their advocates require that stereotypes be reexamined. American schools are making great progress towards including qualified disabled students in education and training after high school.

This fact sheet has been designed to assist those who advise or counsel students with disabilities at all levels of education, but especially those who work with students in high school, community and junior colleges, career training schools, vocational technical schools, four year colleges, universities, and graduate programs. Counselors with Rehabilitation Services and Veterans Services as well as educational brokers are also encouraged to review this material in light of the current increase in program and facility accessibility on today's American campuses.

Disabled Students Today

People who, by birth, illness, or accident do not have use of one or more of life's functions are disabled. The term "functional limitation" describes the impairment of vision, hearing, speaking, mobility, or information processing regardless of cause. Some people have a disability which is obvious—such as one who moves about in a wheelchair. Others may have a hidden functional limitation—such as a person with low vision or a low endurance threshold. With the expansion of opportunities mentioned above, it is crucial that a disabled student be encouraged to explore interests, develop his/her abilities, examine life choices, career options, and educational programs so that he/she can maximize potential and become an independent person. Advisors and counselors can help by providing clients with their own best practices while keeping in mind the strategies identified below.

STRATEGIES
Encourage Students to Assess Interest, Aptitude, and Achievement

Students need to develop and assess academic, vocational, social, and personal interest potentials. All students, including those with disabilities, can do so by following these suggestions:

Take courses in many disciplines: arts, science, math, vocational/technical subjects—exclude none because of disability.

Master basic skills including mathematical computation, writing and composition, keyboarding, and making public presentations.

Explore life experiences by trying a variety of school activities, social functions, volunteer and paid jobs.

Develop personal skills such as problem solving, decision making, and disability management.

Books and pamphlets readily available in the library or on display in the office about the topics which follow are especially useful for those, particularly disabled students, whose social experience may be limited:

social relationships
career options
sexuality
educational choices
civil rights
independent living
availability and management of personal assistants and assistive devices/technology

Workshops or seminars which include both able-bodied and disabled students on such topics as assertiveness, communication skills, and life choices can benefit all concerned.

Provide Non-Restrictive Career Counseling

All students, including those with disabilities, need advice about career choices which is based on the student's interests, abilities, skills, as well as on a realistic picture of today's job market. The current explosion of technological advancements coupled with the unique motivation of individuals means that an ever widening range of the inventory of

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This national clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with handicaps is funded by the U.S. Department of Education

occupations in our economy is accessible to increasing numbers of people regardless of disability. Guidance toward stereotypical occupational goals and incomplete information should be avoided. Emphasis on the following ideas will lead to nonrestrictive career counseling:

- realistic information about employment trends in the current and future job market
- accurate information about educational and certification requirements
- examples of coping strategies and adaptations used by successful disabled people working in various careers
- decision-making based on interest, aptitude, and ability

Note, however that an apparently restricted job market should not necessarily inhibit a student from pursuing it, for the situation may change. Moreover, after being informed about the current job market, the student with a disability—like others—has the right to go against the odds.

Encourage Students to Base Decision-Making About Postsecondary Education and Training on a Variety of Criteria

Advise students to keep disability in its proper perspective. Encourage those with disabilities to focus on their status as students and not on their disability. Thus, disability-related special needs are just one of several criteria to consider in deciding where to study after high school.

Consider criteria in the following order of importance:

training available: field of study, reputation, diversity and size of student body, intellectual and social environment

cost: family or third party contribution, availability of financial aid, work-study or cooperative education opportunities, scholarships/internships

auxiliary aids and accessibility: quality and type of support services appropriate for student's disability

Encourage students to understand his/her disability-related needs and to negotiate accommodations with prospective postsecondary training administrators to select the best choice among several possibilities.

Assure Access to the Counseling Environment

Above all, people with handicaps are especially aware of attitude. Students' progress will be enhanced by the counselor's positive, supportive attitude—one which focuses on the abilities not the disabilities of the student. Positive attitudes can be conveyed by being sure that:

- The physical environment of the guidance office or setting is accessible to all clients.
- Information is publicized about how appropriate accommodations can be made by prior arrangement by a student whose disability precludes using the regular facility, or who relies on alternative modes of communication.

Alternative modes of communication might include the presence of an interpreter, parent, or Rehabilitation Services counselor; or use of an adaptive aid or device such as a speech board or TDD (telecommunications device for the deaf).

- Communication with a disabled student takes place by looking and talking directly to the student/client, not the third party or aid.

There may be times during advising situations when confidentiality becomes an issue. After establishing rapport, even though a third party seems necessary for communication, inform the student/client that the presence of a third party is optional and that at least some of the interview should be between advisor and student alone.

Counselors can suggest various ways to accomplish the dialogue:

Request parent or Rehabilitation Services counselor to wait outside and meet at a certain time.

Suggest communication by writing (or using assistive device) instead of through an interpreter.

Before making any arrangements, or when in doubt, ASK THE STUDENT. He/she may have given the matter thought and can suggest a simple, inexpensive adaptation to the regular situation.

RESOURCES

These Selected Resources May Help Implement the Strategies Above

Vocational Rehabilitation—A nationwide program for assisting disabled people to enter the job market is the state-federal program, Vocational Rehabilitation. Any person is eligible whose disability threatens continued employment, interferes with employability, or disrupts function as homemaker. According to Vocational Rehabilitation guidelines, the disability must be physical or mental and applicants must have a "reasonable chance of being employable following rehabilitation service."

The Vocational Rehabilitation program is an eligibility program, rather than an entitlement program. States participating in the rehabilitation program have been mandated by legislation to emphasize the delivery of services to the most severely handicapped individuals. The priority mandated to severely handicapped individuals affects the eligibility process.

The scope of services varies from state to state, but certain services must be offered by every office without charge and regardless of income. These are:

- evaluation of rehabilitation potential
- counseling, guidance, and referral services
- placement and post-employment followup

Vocational Rehabilitation offices may be found in most cities. To find the VR agency in your area look first under the State listings in your telephone book or contact the HEATH Resource Center for a copy of your **State Resources List** and **Vocational Rehabilitation Services—A Postsecondary Student Consumer's Guide.**

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a Federal program set up to provide financial assistance to the aged, blind, and disabled who have little or no income and resources. The amount of SSI payment is dependent upon the income and resources of the client. (If the student is under 18, some of the parent's income and resources will be included.) The student should be aware that earnings from work-study or other work may affect SSI benefits. If the Social Security Administration approves a **Plan for Achieving Self Support,** the student would be able to set aside income and resources that are being used toward a specific vocational goal (tuition, savings for equipment or other needs) and continue to receive SSI payments. Plans can be developed by Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, public or private social agencies or groups, anyone assisting the student, or the student himself. For more information regarding SSI and the **Plan for Achieving Self Support** contact the local Social Security Administration office.

The **Social Security Disability Insurance** (SSDI) program allows workers and eligible dependents to receive monthly cash benefits because of a period of disability. If the student has been employed, he may file based on his own work record. If the parents of a disabled student have filed for Social Security or if a parent is deceased, the student may also qualify for dependents' benefits based on the parent's work record. For further information on the student provisions and eligibility requirements of the various Social Security programs, contact the local Social Security Administration office.

AHSSPPE—Association on Handicapped Student Services in Postsecondary Education—is the national organization of leaders in the field of providing support services to disabled students. Information sharing is a key element of their goal which is to upgrade the quality of services to disabled students. Member services include annual conference, newsletter, and resource referral. Contact Jane Jarrow, Executive Director, AHSSPPE, P.O. Box 21192, Columbus, Ohio 43221, (614) 488-4972.

HEATH Resource Center will send you by request a single copy of any of the following selected materials:

Career Planning and Placement
Education Beyond High School—The Choice is Yours
Education for Employment
Financial Aid and Disabled Students
Hearing Impaired Students in Postsecondary Education
How to Choose a Career and a Career School: Guide for the Student with a Disability
How to Choose a College: Guide for the Student with a Disability
Learning Disabled Students in Postsecondary Education
Make the Most of Your Opportunities
Vocational Rehabilitation Services—A Student Consumer's Guide

Compiled by Rhona C. Hartman with advice and encouragement from Cindy Kolb (AHSSPPE), Linda Donnels (George Washington University), and Jane Howard-Jasper (American Personnel and Guidance Association), August 1981, reprinted January 1983. Updated in July, 1986 by Rhona C. Hartman with Bonnie Baker (American School and Counselor Association), and Richard Harris (AHSSPPE).

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HEATH PUBLICATIONS LIST

The HEATH Resource Center operates the national clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with handicaps. *HEATH* is an acronym for Higher Education and Adult Training for people with Handicaps. Support from the United States Department of Education enables the Center, a program of the American Council on Education, to serve as an information exchange about educational support services, policies, procedures, adaptations, and opportunities on American campuses, vocational-technical schools, adult education programs, independent living centers, and other training entities after high school. The Center gathers and disseminates this information so that people with disabilities can develop their full potential through postsecondary education and training if they choose.

RESOURCE PAPERS

_____ Access to the Science and Engineering Lab and Classroom
_____ Career Planning and Placement Strategies
_____ Cost Effective Ideas (for administrators)
_____ Education Beyond High School — the Choice is Yours
_____ Education for Employment (vocational education)
_____ Financial Aid for Students with Disabilities
_____ Head Injury Survivor on Campus: Issues and Resources
_____ Hearing Impaired Students in Postsecondary Education
_____ Learning Disabled Adults in Postsecondary Education
_____ Make the Most of Your Opportunities
_____ Measuring Student Progress in the Classroom
_____ Opportunities After High School for Persons who are Severely Handicapped
_____ Strategies for Advising Disabled Students
_____ Vocational Rehabilitation Services — a Student Consumer's Guide
_____ Young Adults with Learning Disabilities and Other Special Needs: Guide for Selecting Postsecondary Transition Programs

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

_____ College Freshmen with Disabilities: Preparing for Employment
_____ ✦HEATH Brochure
_____ ✦HEATH Resource Directory
_____ ✦How to Choose A College: Guide for the Student with a Disability
_____ Newsletter back issues as available
_____ Newsletter Subscription
_____ Resources for Adults with Learning Disabilities

Single copies of *HEATH* resource papers are free to those who request them. Permission to duplicate *HEATH* materials is not necessary and is definitely encouraged.

Is there a topic about which you need specific information which is not listed here? Contact *HEATH* staff, who may be able to select the information you need from the *HEATH* Library, Topic File, or Campus Resource File.

SPECIAL RESOURCES

Multiple copies of the ✦ starred publications may be ordered on a cost recovery basis. For details call *HEATH* toll-free at (800) 544-3284 or 939-9320 in the Washington, DC metro area.

ALTERNATE MEDIA

Current *HEATH* publications are available on cassette from *HEATH* or through the Martin Luther King Regional Library (Washington, DC), a unit of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Please send Audio Cassette _____

HEATH materials are also available in computer media for MS-DOS compatible or Macintosh computers.

Computer Media: ___ MS-DOS. ___ Macintosh
(Please enclose a blank 5 1/4" or 3 1/2" DD/DS diskette.)

Please mail back to HEATH Resource Center, One Dupont Circle, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036-1193. SpecialNet users may order directly to HEATH.ACE. CompuServe subscribers may order via Easyplex ID 73257,14.

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

City State Zip

Check the one that best describes you.

__ Person with a disability
__ Parent
__ Administrator
__ Other (specify) _____
__ Advocate
__ Teacher/Instructor
__ Counselor